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28 February 2003

Dear Professor Newman

**Goldfields Esperance Development Commission Submission
Draft State Sustainability Strategy**

The Goldfields Esperance Development Commission (GEDC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft West Australian State Sustainability Strategy. Our comments are contained in the attached table. Although the comments are fairly broad, the emphasis has been placed on areas of GEDC's responsibility.

The GEDC views sustainability as a very worthwhile pursuit because it provides an opportunity for decisions that take account of not only economic considerations, but also of environmental and social factors. The recognition that all three dimensions are interconnected and impact on each other very much reflects the GEDC's Strategic Plan, and that of all Regional Development Commissions in Western Australia. As the Peel Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 states "There is already a core of local organisations: community, business and government, heavily investing time, energy and resources in many of the actions outlined in this Strategy". The GEDC concurs with this opinion in relation to our region.

The GEDC's Key Results Areas (KRAs) already include many aspects of sustainability through:

1. Retaining and enhancing investment in our region
2. Ensuring preservation and expansion of regional infrastructure
3. Increase the population and enrich its lifestyle

Each of these KRAs are underpinned with strategies and actions. All staff in the region, which includes Esperance, the Northern Goldfields and Kalgoorlie-Boulder, is actively working towards achieving them.

The links between the Draft Sustainability Strategy and the Draft Regional Policy Statement for Western Australia are evident and mutually supportive.

Overall, The GEDC acknowledges that the Draft Strategy is very much a starting point. It is evident that considerable work has gone into the Draft Strategy and much

more is required. The Draft Strategy raises many questions and some of the answers will take a considerable amount of time and effort.

It is agreed that government agencies should lead the way in sustainable practices. Whilst the efforts of the Peel Development Commission to develop a Regional Sustainable Development Strategy are commendable, sustainability needs to be inherent in all planning processes rather than a stand-alone planning document.

The GEDC suggests that Regional Development Commissions use the proposed “Sustainability Code of Practice for Government” as a basis to develop an organisational Sustainability Policy for operations and planning. That Sustainability Policy would then underlie the organisation’s strategic plans and all regional planning, reporting and assessment processes, and day-to-day operations.

The Sustainability Policy should only be applied to existing regional development strategies and planning documents when those documents are due for revision. Revision of major planning documents consumes enormous amounts of human, financial and paper resources and should only be undertaken when more than one factor determines the need for revision.

The incorporation of sustainability principles will be a lengthy and constantly evolving process. Organisations should be encouraged to adopt a gradual and thoroughly integrated approach to incorporating sustainability principles into their operations, rather than rushing into developing sustainability plans at this early stage in the learning process.

The implementation of the Strategy will need considerable work and resources, both in human and financial terms. Further, a substantial education process of the Western Australian community would be required to promote sustainability. A recent consultation project revealed that there is a severe general lack of understanding of the sustainability concept in the community.

Should any pilot projects be established from the Draft Sustainability Strategy, high priority should be given to targeting rural/regional and remote communities. There are many issues impacting on the social sustainability of these communities and it is vital that these be recognised. The GEDC would be pleased to participate in pilot programs if appropriate.

In the Goldfields-Esperance region these include, amongst others:

- The impact of ‘fly-in fly-out practices
- The lack of access to services and diverse service types
- The higher costs of essential items such as food, particularly in remote communities
- The lack of affordable housing options, particularly in the private rental market
- Difficulties in attracting and retaining professional staff to the Region.

It is very important to ensure that every community has a significant stake in the development of the Sustainability Strategy and the milestones, which eventuate. These milestones will play a big part in the promotion of sustainability and the GEDC is committed to ensuring that these are achieved. It is vitally important that regional Western Australia receives the same degree of consideration as the metropolitan areas.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Purcell
Chief Executive Officer

GOLDFIELDS ESPERANCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Area	Item	Comment
<i>Goal 1: Ensure that the way we govern is driving the transition to a sustainable future.</i>	Sustainability Assessment	<p>The proposed Social Assessment Unit in the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) and an Economic Assessment Unit in the Department of Treasury and Finance are considered positive strategies. The Units could assist agencies to address sustainability issues and assist agencies, including Development Commissions with their incorporated plans, and other agencies with their action plans. The Units would need to be inclusive of all tiers of government.</p> <p>There are already some achievements evident in the field and best practice examples could benefit others.</p> <p>The suggestion of a Sustainability Policy Unit, combining Industry/Government expertise is seen as a positive move. This group would be a major resource to industry.</p> <p>The GEDC fully supports this action. As one of the major players in the economic and social wellbeing of the region we already use sustainable whole of government/community principles. The principle of triple bottom line decisions flows through all of the GEDC's action and partnerships. Our projects are inclusive and we consult widely.</p>
	Institutional Change	<p>The concept of a partnership with the WA Local Government Association (LGA) is important as LGAs play an important role within regions. The GEDC works closely and successfully with the LGAs. We would ensure they are included in the formulation of our incorporated plan. The local Government Sustainability Roundtable is also seen as positive. In Kalgoorlie-Boulder the GEDC participates in the Mayors Leadership Group that addresses issues identified in the community. The importance of a partnership approach across government boundaries cannot be emphasised enough.</p>
	Embracing sustainability in government agencies Group.	<p>The Sustainability Policy Unit could provide assistance to agencies. It is unclear whether the unit would perform a monitoring role, or a legislative basis.</p>

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	Partnerships for action.	A positive initiative. Many regions have their own highly developed portals. A high percentage of people in our region have access to the internet. This could also be used in the education process in schools,
	Planning for Regional Sustainability	The proposed Strategic Alliance for Sustainability within the DPI is sound and should comprise wide representation from all three tiers of government, and industry.
	Indigenous communities and sustainability	Our region has a high population of Indigenous people and the development of an Indigenous Regional Sustainability strategy to tie in with a local plan is sound, and something we would naturally do. This Indigenous Regional Sustainability Strategy must have Federal Government support. Further detailed comments regarding actions relating to Indigenous issues are on a separate report.
	Research and development for sustainability and recognising environmental excellence.	The establishment of a Global Centre for Sustainability to address local and global challenges in theory is a positive move in the long term and would help demonstrate this to the world. On a local level, recognition with awards is a practical “quick-win”. Anecdotally the WA Tidy Towns competition is now focused on sustainability and entries have dropped substantially, as well as the national competition. This may indicate a lack of knowledge about sustainability in the community.
	Sustainability information on-line	Many regions have well established and maintained web sites and they could be aligned to a ‘sustainability on line’. product. This would also be a good teaching tool for students at all levels. Development Commission web sites could be considered for this.

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Goal 2: Play or part in solving the global challenges of sustainability	Population, development aid and environment technology	The Global Centre for sustainability would assist in this action. Our core business is very much aligned with this goal. This is especially important in the smaller towns in our region that may be experiencing decreasing populations and economies.
	Maintaining our biodiversity	Eco-tourism and eco-prospecting are increasingly becoming more popular in regional WA and should be encouraged and supported. Institutions such as the Centre for the Management of Arid Environments (CMAE) located in Kalgoorlie-Boulder encourage research and development of biodiversity in our region. Our region is very diverse ecologically and the sustainability of our ecology will be of increasing importance in the future. The remote location of the region's rangelands where some of our communities are located means that monitoring and conservation activities rely predominantly on people already there to maintain them, such as pastoralists and mining companies. Centralised government agencies will find it increasingly difficult to undertake work in the rangelands when their "volunteer" or defacto workforce reaches crisis point. Ensuring communities located in the rangelands are sustainability is vital to the future of our natural, economic and social future. Assisting pastoralists wishing to remain on the land and diversify are also issues.
	Oil vulnerability, the gas transition and the hydrogen economy.	In more remote regions these issues are seen as very important, particularly in the changing world environment. The suggested Taskforce is a positive strategy.

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<i>Goal 3: Value and protect our natural environment and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources</i>	Sustainable agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, forests and plantations and mining and petroleum production	Natural resources in our region are of vital importance. Our economy is largely based on minerals exploration. This is perhaps the goal that the GEDC is most concerned about. The whole of Western Australia faces sustainability challenges in all these areas and the State Sustainability Strategy is a positive starting point to address these.
	Sustainable tourism	This is an area of rapid expansion within our region and one that needs to be encouraged on a statewide basis with the trend towards eco-tourism and holidays and travel closer to home. The environment however needs to be maintained with this trend.
	Sustainable coastal and marine environments	This is of vital importance to our region and being addressed in Esperance.

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Goal 4: Plan and provide settlements that reduce the ecological footprint and enhance quality of life at the same time	Facilitate projects to provide sustainability gains for country towns including regional Sustainability Strategies that build on the 'sense of place' stories of each community.	The development of a regional transport hub in the Goldfields is one of many projects that is planned to manage the freight and regional transport component of this goal. Local Government Associations work closely with the GEDC on this item. The region already has a very strong sense of place, due to its heritage and history. The launch of tourism trails within the region, particularly the Golden Quest Discovery Trail (being launched on March 28 2003) further enhances this.
	Facilitate projects to provide sustainability gains for country towns including regional Sustainability Strategies that build on the 'sense of place' stories of each community	Together with other agencies, the GEDC will investigate this issue. Support mechanisms and finance to encourage local government and industry to adopt a sustainable energy policy has not been addressed.
	Growth management and revitalisation	The government needs to undertake a major campaign to get those places that are being overused, such as Perth and the South-West into another part of the state – marketing and promoting the benefits of regional WA, and perhaps provide financial incentives. Some of the actions in this goal are very metrocentric.
	Demonstrate government leadership in sustainable energy through Sustainability Action Plans	Note: this action is very similar to 4.1. Our region is rich in history and heritage and it is vital to preserve and honour this for future generations and us. The Golden Quest Discovery Trail will enable this to happen when it is launched shortly. This heritage trail encompasses 965km of our region, with products bringing our history to life. It is a true legacy for the future.
	Support Regional Sustainability strategies as opportunities to develop 'sense of place stories'. This will provide opportunities for communities to document their own stories of place so their stories are not lost.	The GEDC considers that the Goldfields-Esperance communities already have a good sense of place and a good understanding of the importance of social and community well being. The sense of belonging and inclusion experienced in the regions is far greater than that experienced by citizens living in the metropolitan area.
	Water	This issue is also very relevant to the Goldfields-Esperance region, not only to the South-West region. A reliable source of water at affordable prices is holding back the economic and social development of this region. This goal is most important, and without it the region is

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<i>Goal 5: Support communities to fully participate in achieving a sustainable future</i>	Community services and development	The co-ordination of services across the three tiers of government has always been a challenge and there is still a large degree of overlap with agencies working in isolation and unaware of what other departments are doing. This is particularly evident in the more remote regions such as Ngaanyatjaraku. The Regional Integrated Community Service Plans is considered positive and should be appropriately resourced.
	Housing and sustainability	The role of local government and housing associations are vital to sustainability. Sustainability in housing should ideally reflect the community in which it is developed, particularly in Indigenous communities.
	Healthy communities	This is vital for the sustainability of any community but more so in regional communities where the attraction of professional medical staff is an issue. Community health is a broad issue and provision of these services crucial in regional areas.
	Education and community awareness for sustainability	This must be considered the “cornerstone” of any action. A bottom up approach must be achieved for success.
	Multiculturalism and sustainability	Understanding and appreciating other cultures encourages sustainability.